

CD 2007-23/24

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC



2006-2007 SEASON

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET GREAT MUSIC

Monday, March 5, 2007
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

Chamber Music Series
Presents

AVIV STRING QUARTET

Sergey Ostrovsky & Evgenia Epshtein, violins
Shuli Waterman, viola; Rachel Mercer, cello

TOKAI STRING QUARTET

Amanda Goodburn & Csaba Koczó, violins
Yosef Tamir, viola; Rafael Hoekman, cello

PROGRAM

String Quintet in C major, D. 956

Franz Schubert

Allegro ma non troppo

Adagio

Scherzo (Presto) - Trio (Andante sostenuto)

Allegretto

Aviv Quartet, with Shauna Rolston, cello

- INTERMISSION -

Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57

Dmitry Shostakovich

Prelude

Fugue

Scherzo

Intermezzo

Finale

Tokai Quartet, with James Parker, piano

Octet for Strings in E-flat major, Op. 20

Felix Mendelssohn

Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco

Andante

Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo

Presto

Aviv and Tokai Quartets

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Guest Artists of the Chamber Music Series are funded through
the Visiting Chamber Ensembles program at the Faculty of Music.

This recital is performed on the Edith McConica Steinway piano.

Program Notes

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828) String Quintet in C major, D. 956

On March 29, 1827, a crowd of over 10,000 attended Beethoven's funeral procession as it wound its way through Vienna. Among the torchbearers was one of the deceased master's greatest admirers: Schubert. And although it remains unclear if the two ever met, Beethoven is said to have remarked, "Truly there is a divine spark in this Schubert," after reading some of the younger composer's songs on his deathbed. Schubert himself had less than two years to live. In 1823 he had contracted syphilis, and despite periods of remission, he suffered greatly until his death. But illness, and the musical vacuum created by Beethoven's departure, seem only to have impelled him to new creative heights. Pouring out one masterwork after another, he showed no signs of succumbing to his own lament, "Who can do anything after Beethoven?"

In his last months, before typhoid fever set in, Schubert composed one of the towering achievements of chamber music: the String Quintet in C major. Nearly an hour in performance, it is a work of extraordinary scale, though a journey of such musical and emotional breadth that its length is not felt—few works transport the listener in this way. From Beethoven's string quartets come extreme and often unexpected contrasts; from Mozart, passages of beautiful lyricism. To this Schubert adds his own uniquely rich harmonic palette and the warmth of a second cello (instead of the customary second viola).

In the first movement, an *Allegro ma non troppo*, the lyricism of the second theme group, a duet for the two cellos, is underscored by an unusual harmonic plan: it begins in E-flat major (via C minor) before proceeding to the expected G major (the dominant), a device that Charles Rosen calls "an extension of Schubert's beloved hovering between major and minor modes." The expressive contrast in modes is later paralleled in a development section that repeatedly juxtaposes violence and serenity.

The E-major *Adagio* suspends time. A chorale in the inner three voices, accompanied by interjections in the first violin, above and the second cello, pizzicato, below, unfolds ever so slowly, a single long breath of

purity and peace. But in the middle section, contemplation is interrupted by an outburst in F minor (the Neapolitan key relationship permeates the work) of incredible intensity, underpinned by the ominous rumble of the second cello. But "divine peace confronts and dispels human angst," as Brian Newbould puts it; the initial calm returns, now infused with some of the drama of the previous section. But even these faint echoes of turmoil dissipate as the movement ends in a perfect arc, punctuated only by one last breath of fire.

The Scherzo, marked *Presto*, begins with a jubilant fanfare (you all but hear the natural horns and trumpets) that seems to herald an event of consequence. The thick sonority of the lower strings is here showcased by double-stops in close spacing. The Trio, in sharp contrast, is an *Andante sostenuto*, in the Neapolitan key. Its slow tempo and emphasis on the lower register has led many to hear in it a funeral march.

The finale, an *Allegretto* in sonata-rondo form, whose two principal themes are both dance-like (the first, lively and vigorous, the second, elegant and refined), is a welcome reprieve from the weight of the earlier longer movements. Though flashes of violence and calm recall the journey on which we have been led, we dance wildly to the finish: *più allegro*, and then *più presto*—faster still. The work concludes with a D-flat grace note ornamenting the tonic C, a final Neapolitan gesture.

"Whenever I attempted to sing of love, it turned to pain. And again, when I tried to sing of pain, it turned to love," wrote Schubert. In this Quintet, there is both love and pain—and more. It is distinguished, according to John Reed, by its "aims to include everything." The peace and turmoil that mingle throughout thus shape an intimate portrait of what it means to be human, from joy to suffering.

Schubert died on November 19, 1828. At only 31, he died younger than both Mozart before him and Mendelssohn after him. Schubert's remains lie next to his hero Beethoven's, and on his tombstone is inscribed the epitaph written by a friend, the poet Franz Grillparzer: "The art of music here entombed a rich possession, but even fairer hopes."

DIMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)
Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57

"A splendid continuation of classical tradition," is how Shostakovich scholar Laurel Fay summarizes the public and critical reception of the composer's Piano Quintet, premiered in 1940. With its Mozartean transparent textures and generally positive demeanour reminiscent of Viennese Classicism, it is no wonder that everyone was talking about Shostakovich the "neoclassicist." Sure, Shostakovich the romantic is present, but the characteristic violent intensity and introspective pain is largely absent—or at least restrained. The only significant departure from traditional form is the expansion of Classical four-movement design to include Baroque influences: around a central *Scherzo* are, on the one hand, a Bach-inspired *Prelude* and *Fugue*, and on the other, an *Intermezzo* and *Finale*. Another innovation is the treatment of the piano. Silent for long stretches at a time, it is frequently treated as a simple melodic instrument (in multiple-octave spread).

The *Prelude* is marked *Lento* and opens with a majestic gesture in the solo piano, reprised by the strings, that culminates with a G major chord. The contrasting middle section is light and sparse: one or two strings combined with the piano. The return of the opening's grandeur is more imposing on account of the slower tempo and denser figuration.

The *Fugue*, an *Adagio*, doubles as the work's slow movement. The first violin alone, playing *con sordino* and *pianissimo* (is softer than this possible?), introduces a long meandering subject that is almost religious in its unrelenting focus. The other strings join in, one by one, their combined muted sound like a hushed organ. The entry of the piano in bass octaves is breathtaking. In typical Shostakovich fashion, the slow movement gradually builds up in rhythmic activity and dynamic level, and reaches a climax of painful intensity. Relief comes in the form of solo piano and cello cadenzas, after which the fugue subject is developed in a varied recapitulation. But now the fugal fragments disintegrate into subdued despair.

One can always count on Shostakovich for contrast, and he delivers just that in the boisterous *Scherzo* that follows. Accompanied by incessant chugging in the strings, a slightly banal though lively theme emerges in

the piano. The violin interjects with Gypsy-like solos complete with glissandi and left-hand pizzicato. The *Allegretto's* percussive pulse remains unrelenting until the end.

An *Intermezzo* marked *Lento* restores a measure of calm: over a walking pizzicato bass line supplied by the cello, the first violin leisurely unfurls a continuous melody joined by the viola in thirds. The movement takes a turn into darker and uncertain territory, like an intrusive bad memory, but the cloudy thoughts are fleeting, and the music recedes into calm.

The *Finale* is a cheerful, light and airy *Allegretto*, the ornamental runs in the piano almost giddy. Over a Bolero-inspired rhythm in the strings, the piano proclaims an incisive and jubilant tune in its upper register that evokes the percussive bite of a xylophone. Perhaps getting carried away, the tune loses its way in a muddle of instability and uncertainty underlined by a mysterious unison string passage. But a vigorous cadenza in the first violin leads to a recapitulation of the opening light-heartedness, the strings now imitating the piano's initial arabesques. The piece ends casually, like a group of friends walking off together after a pleasant evening out, their conversation fading into the night.

Shostakovich's Piano Quintet was hailed as "a portrait of the age, the rich-toned, perfect voice of the present" and as "unquestionably the best composition of 1940." His most successful piece to date, it quickly became one of his most popular works. In March 1941 it received the Stalin Prize—the first year that the state's highest honour for achievements in the arts and sciences was awarded. Three months later, on June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)
Octet for Strings in E-flat major, Op. 20

Schumann considered Mendelssohn "the Mozart of the nineteenth century, the most brilliant musician, the one who most clearly sees through the contradictions of the age and for the first time reconciles them." The fact that Mendelssohn was a musical prodigy the equal of Mozart made the comparison natural. At 10, Mendelssohn began studies with Carl Zelter, a composer and teacher who emphasized the art of counterpoint and who inspired Mendelssohn's life-long love of Bach

and Handel. The young musician's progress was astonishing. On his 12th birthday, his first Singspiel was staged with orchestra. Six weeks later, he wrote another Singspiel for his mother's birthday (which she thought was an improvement). On Mendelssohn's 15th birthday, Zelter announced the end of his apprenticeship and welcomed him into the "brotherhood of Bach, Mozart and Haydn." Mendelssohn's progress was so rapid that his first masterwork, the Octet, composed when he was just 16, even surpasses the achievements of Mozart at that age, whose first mature works did not come until he was 19 (the violin concertos of 1775).

The Octet's mastery of craft is unquestionable, from its breathtaking command of counterpoint to its fluency in the handling of extended forms. Most remarkable, perhaps, is that all movements are cast in some sort of sonata form, each tailored perfectly to its material.

The *Allegro moderato ma con fuoco* launches straight off into the first theme, and it is immediately apparent that we are listening to a musical octopus, a living organism whose parts move independently but are carefully coordinated. Over the pulsating tremolos, the first violin unveils a melody of enormous sweep, whose arpeggios rise ever higher, culminating, almost concerto-like, with the very high E-flat at the end of the exposition. The intricate counterpoint is made that much more transparent by the wide range of note-values used, from the very short to the very long. The fiery development retreats into a mournful passage that in turn dissolves to almost nothing. Then a gradual return of faster note-values leads exhilaratingly to the abbreviated recapitulation. A more perfect retransition is unimaginable.

The tonal ambiguity of the *Andante's* opening leads to a second theme whose gorgeous suspensions lend it a shimmering radiance. A movement of harmonic wonders, it explores the tension between C minor and

C major and leaves an overall impression of calm stillness over which occasionally pass shadows.

The *Scherzo*, marked *Allegro leggierissimo*, and played *pianissimo* and *staccato* from beginning to end, is rapid and fleeting. "Eight string players might easily practice it for a lifetime without coming to an end of their delight in producing its marvels of tone colour," comments Donald Tovey. The movement ends as nimbly as it begins.

The fugal *Presto* finale opens with the second cello chugging away on the first of four distinct themes that make up the first theme group, the second of which, in longer note-values, is a quotation of Handel's *Messiah* ("And He shall reign forever and ever") from the Hallelujah Chorus. The ingenious counterpoint is often compared to the finale of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony; but Mendelssohn simply dazzles by incorporating a cyclic return: near the end of the development, he reintroduces the opening theme of the *Scherzo*.

The Octet did not appear in print until 1833, and then only as a set of parts (the score was not published until 1848). Comparison of the original manuscript with the printed parts has shown that sometime in the eight years after its composition, Mendelssohn revised the work. The revisions affected the part-writing but also major issues of formal structure. In particular, Mendelssohn adjusted proportions by cutting away large blocks of the original to create greater flexibility in the sonata-form designs, an effect that contributes to the Octet's organic feel. But this in no way diminishes Mendelssohn's accomplishment. It is work that any mature master would gladly call his own; besides, Mendelssohn was no older than 24 when he made the revisions.

Notes © 2006-07 by Robert Rival, doctoral candidate in composition in the Faculty of Music. www.robertrival.com



Next on the Chamber Music Series

Monday, April 2, 2007

Gomalan Brass Quintet

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Biographies

The **AVIV QUARTET** was founded in 1997 and has appeared at many venues throughout Israel, including the Jerusalem Music Center (Mishkenot Shaananim), the Jaffa Music Center, and the Tel-Aviv Museum of Arts. In 1998, the quartet participated in the summer course given by members of the Amadeus Quartet at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

In July 1998, it performed as the resident quartet at the Kfar Blum Festival (Upper Galilee Music Days). In addition to participating in the Amadeus Quartet Week, the Aviv Quartet has participated in master classes given by Ivri Gitlis, Levon Chilingirian, Henry Meyer, Arnold Steinhardt, and Miriam Fried.

In June 1998 the Aviv Quartet was the Israeli representative at the Encounters chamber music course in Jerusalem under the direction of Maestro Isaac Stern and with the participation of members of the Emerson and Juilliard Quartets. The Aviv Quartet was coached by Mr. Chaim Taub and Ms. Irena Svetlova.

As of October 1998, the Aviv Quartet studies with the members of the Alban Berg Quartet in Cologne, Germany and in the Royal School of Music at Rotterdam with Ben-Zion Shamir. Presently the Aviv Quartet is collaborating and working with the Ysaÿe Quartet in the CNR Paris.

All members of the quartet are recipients of scholarships from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation & the Art Council of Canada.

In May 1999, the Aviv Quartet was awarded the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Germany Prize and a special prize of the Ministry of Education of the State of Israel.

In May 1998, the Aviv Quartet won second prize at the International String Quartet Competition at the Prague Spring Festival.

The 2000-2001 season found the Aviv Quartet starring in the International Chamber Music festival in Jerusalem. Their debut tour to Paris (Auditorium Louvre), London (Wigmore Hall) and New York (Weill Recital Carnegie Hall) brought them immediate repeated invitations. The Aviv Quartet toured and performed (2000-2001) in Great Britain & Ireland, Germany, Holland, China, & Israel. During June 2001 the Aviv Quartet participated in the Alban Berg Quartet Anniversary concert series in Tel Aviv to a great public and critic acclaim.

During March 2001 The Aviv Quartet performed again in Paris at the Midis Musicaux in Theatre du Châtelet and toured the UK and Ireland (Wigmore Hall, Warwick Arts Festival, Dublin and St. John's Smith Square) with Pianist Louis Demetrius Alvanis. After participating in the Upper Galilee Chamber Music Festival they were invited to the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival 2001 and to debut in the Dubrovnik Festival and December 2001 in Wien Konzerthaus. Following their first recording for NAXOS they will tour the USA, South America, South Africa and Australia.

Praised by the Toronto Star for their "emotional investment" and "decisive" interpretations, the **TOKAI STRING QUARTET** is poised to become one of Canada's leading string quartets. The vibrancy that this exciting young ensemble brings to their performances is gaining them enthusiastic audiences across Canada, and has earned the Tokai Quartet a growing demand for performances.

The Quartet received international exposure while competing in the 8th Banff International String Quartet Competition and were subsequently featured on the CBC's 'Music Around Us' and 'In Performance'. The success of these performances led to repeat invitations from the CBC for the "Music Around Us" 2005/6 series. The quartet has also been invited back to perform for the Kitchener Waterloo Chamber Society and Barrie's 'Colours of Music' Festival in 2006. In 2006, The Quartet will be performing at the University of Toronto in collaboration with the St Lawrence Quartet, at the Metamorphosis Series in Peterborough and in Winnipeg at the Virtuosi Concert Series with guitarist Daniel Bolshoy.

The Tokai Quartet had its beginnings in 2002 while three of its members were students at the University of Toronto; here the Quartet benefited from the guidance of the late Lorand Fenyves. The members of the St Lawrence Quartet have also been significant mentors to the Tokai Quartet, their Summer Music Seminars at Stanford University being a source of inspiration and instruction. The Tokai Quartet has also studied with the Emerson, Ying and Orion Quartets, with Scott St. John and with Henk Guitart of the Schoenberg Quartet.

The commitment and generosity of their

teachers is passed on by the Tokai Quartet in their own flourishing teaching career, which began at the University of Toronto when the Quartet was invited back to give masterclasses. This year the Tokai Quartet was ensemble-in-residence on the faculties of the Silver Creek Summer Music School at the University of Toronto and the Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute, where intensive schedules saw them coaching numerous ensembles, giving masterclasses and of course, performing.

The accomplishments of this gifted ensemble have earned the Tokai Quartet some impressive accolades. In 2003 they were recipients of the Felix Galimir Award, the University of Toronto's highest award for chamber music. This led to a short concert tour of performances in collaboration with Scott St John, Douglas MacNabney and the St Lawrence Quartet. The following year the Tokai Quartet went on to receive the Sir Ernest MacMillan Memorial Foundation Award for Young Canadian Chamber Music Ensembles, which has facilitated their participation in residencies at the Banff Centre for the Arts and at the Stanford Summer Music Festival. They were further distinguished by the award of a Debut concert fully funded by the Frederick Gaviller Music Foundation, which took place in April 2005. Most recently, Debut Atlantic awarded them an extensive concert tour of Atlantic Canada. This much anticipated event will take place in the spring of 2007.

Having been named "Young Artist to Watch" by Musical America, celebrated cellist

SHAUNA ROLSTON is considered to be one of the most compelling musicians of her

generation. Following her formative studies at the renowned Banff Centre, Shauna earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History from Yale University and a Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music where she studied with Aldo Parisot. Since her New York City Town Hall debut at the age of 16, Shauna continues to perform regularly in major concert venues and festivals worldwide. Recent highlights include recitals in Finland and Iceland during Governor General Adrienne Clarkson's state visit and at New York's Lincoln Center, as well as concerto performances with the China Philharmonic (Casals Festival), Banff Festival, Winnipeg, Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto and Utah Symphonies. A passionate and devoted educator, Shauna is a Professor of Cello and Co-Head of the String Department at the University of Toronto and a Visiting Artist at The Banff Centre.

Pianist **JAMIE PARKER** grew up on the west coast of Canada in a musical family. His teachers included Keiko Parker, Edward Parker, Kum-Sing Lee (Vancouver Academy of Music and UBC), Adèle Marcus (Juilliard), and Marek Jablonski (Banff Centre). Jamie enjoys the variety of performing solo repertoire, concerti, vocal repertoire, and chamber music, and he can be heard in live concerts, radio broadcasts, and recordings. Since founding the Gryphon Trio with Roman Borys and Annalee Patipatanakoon in 1993, their activities have taken them around the world. When he's not traveling, Dr. Parker is a Professor at the University of Toronto, where he holds the *Rupert E. Edwards Chair in Piano Performance*.

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Quartet is at present the only chamber group currently engaged by the Faculty of Music as regular visiting artists. We are determined to retain our association with this quartet and secure additional arrangements with one more string ensemble, a piano chamber group (like the Gryphon Trio), one wind quintet, and a brass group. To learn more about how your financial support can help make this academic priority a reality, please contact Miriam Stephan at 416-946-3145.

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